

FACT SHEET

ALBANIA'S WTO ACCESSION

The results of Albania's bilateral negotiations with the United States have been merged with those negotiated with other current WTO Members into consolidated schedules of concessions. These schedules, which also include commitments on agricultural supports and subsidies, are annexed to a Protocol of Accession that reflects its implementation of WTO provisions as recorded in the Working Party Report. These documents make up the "protocol package" which will be considered on for adoption on October 6 by the WTO Working Party established to conduct the accession negotiations. When adopted, the package will be transmitted to the WTO General Council for approval. The Administration will consult with the U.S. Congress on the "protocol package" prior to its consideration by the WTO General Council, as required by section 121 of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act. After Council approval, Albania will be invited to sign its Protocol of Accession. When domestic ratification procedures are completed, the instrument of ratification will be deposited with the WTO, and Albania will be a member thirty days later.

Schedules for Goods

Albania's tariff schedule sets out the maximum import duties ("bindings") allowed under WTO rules. Albania has agreed to bind all tariffs for agriculture and non-agricultural items. Albania uses the 1996 Harmonized System tariff nomenclature endorsed by WTO members.

Agriculture. Albania has agreed to join the zero-duty sectoral initiative on oilseeds and oilseeds products that will allow U.S. exports of soybeans, soybean products, and other vegetable oils to enter Albania without tariffs. Tariffs on a substantial portion of the remaining agricultural products, including U.S. priorities, generally will range from zero to twelve percent. In addition, Albania has agreed to prohibit the introduction of agricultural export subsidies and will only provide agricultural domestic support at the *de minimus* level allowed under the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (5 percent of the value of domestic agricultural production).

Non-agricultural tariffs. Albania will join the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) upon accession and agreed to participate in many other sectoral initiatives of high commercial importance to U.S. exporters: agricultural equipment, civil aircraft, chemical harmonization, construction equipment, fish, furniture, medical equipment, paper, pharmaceuticals, steel, textiles and apparel, and toys. Tariff bindings on the remaining industrial products generally range from zero to twelve percent.

Schedule for Services

Albania undertook comprehensive commitments guaranteeing U.S. services suppliers the right to provide services through establishing a presence in the Albanian market or through cross-border supply. The commitments provide market access and national treatment for many key U.S. industry sectors. Liberalization of these areas also will directly contribute to development of Albania's economy and infrastructure for trade. The commitments include the sectors of financial services (insurance, banking and securities); basic- and value-added telecommunications services;

professional services (foreign legal consultancy, accounting and auditing, architectural and engineering), computer and related services; advertising services; management consulting; courier services; audio-visual services; construction and engineering; distribution services (wholesale and retail trade and franchising); environmental services; hospital and other health care facilities; tourism and travel-related services; and transportation. In a few cases, the commitments will be phased-in over reasonable periods of time.

Other areas included in the “protocol package”

In addition to negotiating on tariffs and services, Albania has moved to implement in its laws all obligations related to WTO Agreements, including those on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), Customs Valuation, Import Licensing Procedures, Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Rules of Origin, and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS). Albania has also eliminated quantitative barriers to trade, import reference prices, and taxes that discriminate against imports in the context of its WTO accession, revised its customs fee structure, provided additional transparency and due process in customs and technical certification requirements for imports, and rationalized its activity licensing system to ensure that it did not impair the right of importers and exporters to trade.